



Funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

# Study: Research capacity at higher education institutions in the Western Balkans - 2017



## **General overview**

- 2014-2017 (intended to prolong to 2018)
- Provided by the European Commission through the EACEA
- Implemented by SPHERE consortium:
  - University of Barcelona & European University Association (EUA)
- Support to 260 Higher Education Reform Experts in 26 European Neighbourhood countries
- Close cooperation with National Erasmus Offices (NEO)

#### Activities

- Events: Annual conference, 2 thematic seminars, 2 study visits at higher education institutions
- Technical Assistance Missions (TAM approx 55/year)
  - Targeted county assistance
  - Annual call for proposals
  - Expert provided for national support/national activity
- Website and Virtual Community
- Studies



### Study: Research Capacity at higher education institutions in the Western Balkans

#### Purpose

- Map research capacity at higher ed institutions (HEI) in WB (defined as human resources (HR), financial resources & research infrastructure) through desk research and questionnaires.
- Provide country analyses of research capacity, including some cross-regional and cross-EU comparisons, for illustration purposes (e.g. compare the weakest/strongest MS, also in terms of GDP spending on research etc., to give an idea of where countries stand in the wider picture of EU accession).
- Provide recommendations for national authorities with regards to building research capacity in WB countries
- Provide comprehensive recommendations for measures to be taken by the EU (through future programmes).



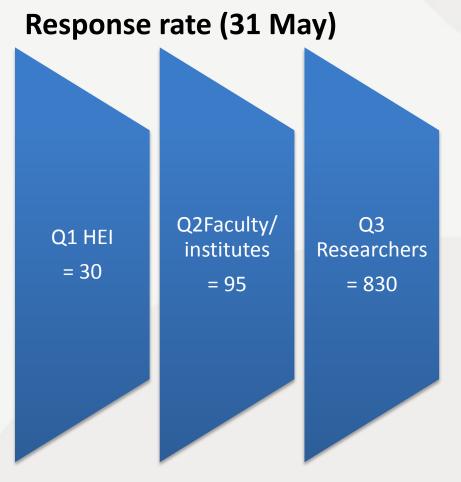
# Method

- Desk research
- Surveys to HEI, faculties, researchers
- Visits to Albania, Kosovo\*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia
- 1-2 universities per country
  - Leadership (rector / VR research)
  - Deans
  - Faculty/ researchers
  - Junior researchers/ PhD candidates
- Interviews with Ministry, industry representatives ...

\*(This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.)

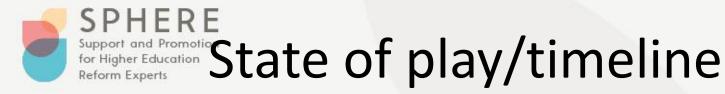


### Survey



### Approach

- 3 complementary questionnaires interlinked
- March-May: disseminated via HEI leadership
- June: follow-up by phone to HEI & faculties, international offices
- Diverse reactions:
  - Welcomed as a means for self-evaluation
  - Survey fatigue: "it will not change anything" (reference to previous surveys, that would not have been followed up)
- Survey design considered decentralised institutional structure
- Surveys still ongoing in order to achieve better geographical distribution
- Responses often from institutions with low research performance
- Overall low response from researchers (most responses from Serbia)
- Evaluation: beginning July



- Surveys close to conclusion trying to get a better geographical spread
- Visits & interviews started
- Preliminary results: mid-July
- Results ready September

Serbia	31May – 2 June
FYR of Macedonia	6-7 June
Kosovo*	8-9 June
Bosnia-Herz	15 June
Albania	19-21 June
Montenegro	22-23 June
Bosnia-Herz	26 June?

Final report & recommendations: Nov/Dec 2017



# First observations

Based on survey and visits in Serbia

- Strong interest in intra-WB research collaboration
- very low level of funding (research grants) to undertake Research projects.
- no calls for capital equipment for many years
- Sustainability problems due to high costs for maintenance & renewal of equipment, research materials (higher than e.g. in EU countries) etc.
- Diminishing prospects for contract research/ industry collaboration (also due to privatisation of industry) - difficulties in building up relations with SMIs
- Research in highly decentralised institutions with autonomous faculties and institutions
  - collaboration depending on individual staff
  - obstacles for sharing resources
  - difficulty of organising adequate research support capacities
- Doctoral education
  - based on the apprenticeship model
  - no to low attention to transversal skills
  - mentoring & access to research means varies case by case
  - urgent need for more structured support (e.g. career advice ...)



### Contact

#### TEAM:

- Experts
  - Melita Kovacevic, University Zagreb
  - Lisa Cowey, independent consultant in Research, Development & Innovation
- Coordinator: European University Association
  - Michael Gaebel & various colleagues <u>michael.gaebel@eua.be</u>